

Opening Remarks by Lord Janner of Braunstone

**Message by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Wim Kok**

Message by the Prime Minister of Denmark, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen

Message by the Prime Minister of Austria, Viktor Klima

Speech by Professor Eberhart Jäckel

**Message by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Wim Kok**  
Kok, Wim

## Message by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands

First of all I want to thank the Swedish Government for organising this international conference.

Many of the contributions to today's discussions were based on personal experiences of what the war and what Nazi persecution meant for people. These deeply moving testimonies show how important it is to preserve the memory of the Holocaust in all its aspects. We must not allow it to become just a page in the history books.

The Holocaust, its effects on mankind and its lessons are at the heart of our past, present and future.

We have an obligation to ensure that present and future generations not only know the facts, but also draw the right conclusions from them.

Education is the key to fulfilling this obligation.

This conference and the continued efforts of the International Task Force on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research are essential contributions to greater awareness and better understanding of the Holocaust and its aftermath.

I say better understanding, because even fifty-five years after the end of the Second World War, it is still difficult for us to grasp the realities of that period.

One reason for this is that the past is not a static notion. I would like to consider two phenomena that illustrate the dynamic nature of the past and, in particular, the way we think about that past today.

First of all, for almost fifty years after World War Two, historical research concentrated on the war itself and on the unspeakable suffering of those persecuted by the Nazi regime. Only in the last five or six years, also the years immediately following the war have also begun to receive the attention they are due.

We are now also asking, how did our societies - not the Nazi regime, not the collaborators, but our postwar societies - treat those who survived the concentration camps and returned?

Secondly, as time passes we look back at the past from a greater distance, sometimes from a different perspective, and with more profound knowledge and understanding. The last fifty years have brought new insights, new standards and new opportunities.

These allow us, perhaps even force us, to reconsider the rightfulness of what happened in the postwar years with the benefit of hindsight, as part of an ongoing learning process within our national societies and worldwide.

The Netherlands has launched a number of investigations to identify shortcomings in the postwar restoration of legal rights to those deprived of them during the German occupation.

Their findings so far demonstrate that the restitution of legal rights in the impoverished postwar Netherlands was basically correct from a legal and

### Introduction

Opening Session: Messages and speeches

Plenary Sessions: Messages and speeches

- Plenary Session 1
- Plenary Session 2
- Reception at the Stockholm City Hall
- Written Messages

Workshops, Panels and Seminars

Closing Session and Declaration

Other Activities

formal point of view, but at the same time their reports identify and criticise a number of shortcomings: the length of the process, the cumbersome and inflexible procedures and above all the chill reception and lack of understanding that awaited those returning from the camps.

A situation that was without any doubt not unique to the Netherlands.

I realise that - just as we can never undo the horrendous suffering and death the war brought about - we cannot fully remedy the shortcomings in the postwar period.

But what we can do is recognise these deficiencies, learn from them and rectify them wherever possible. This is the course of action my government and the Dutch people are committed to.

As to the future we must continue telling the stories, so that they are not forgotten. And of course, we must not let it happen again. Unfortunately, fascism, racism and ethnic cleansing are not things of the past; they are still with us, in many forms, large and small, far and near.

Two thirds of the present-day population were born after the war. For the next generation, the war will belong to the previous century. The number of people with active memories of that period is diminishing every day.

That is why the Netherlands feels it is essential to promote projects that educate young people about the Second World War and foster greater awareness and understanding of the period. In one of our programmes, survivors talk to schoolchildren about their wartime experiences.

These lectures are followed by discussions of discrimination, racism and intolerance as the children witness or experience them in their daily lives.

Another programme involves the 'adoption' of a large number of monuments to the war and the resistance by classes of schoolchildren, who help look after them.

The aim is to teach children what 'their' monument commemorates and to help them understand its relevance today.

Through still another programme, large numbers of children visit a war or resistance museum each year. Before their visit, they study the historical background thoroughly at school.

These are just a few of the ways we are preparing for the future. I am sure there are many other examples we could learn from. The exchange of experiences on Holocaust remembrance and education at this conference is an outstanding one, and the International Task Force will continue this process. Bilateral cooperation in the educational field can also be rewarding for both participating countries, as the Netherlands' experiences with the Czech Republic have taught us.

I reaffirm the Dutch enduring commitment to the work of the Task Force. We are pleased to welcome you to the Netherlands during the Dutch chairmanship of the Task Force that starts end of this year.

The most important aim is not to forget.

To keep reflecting on the moral questions involved in the Holocaust, and on our responsibilities as citizens of democratic nations.

The better we come to grips with our past, the better we are able to face the present and the future.

>> [Back to top](#)